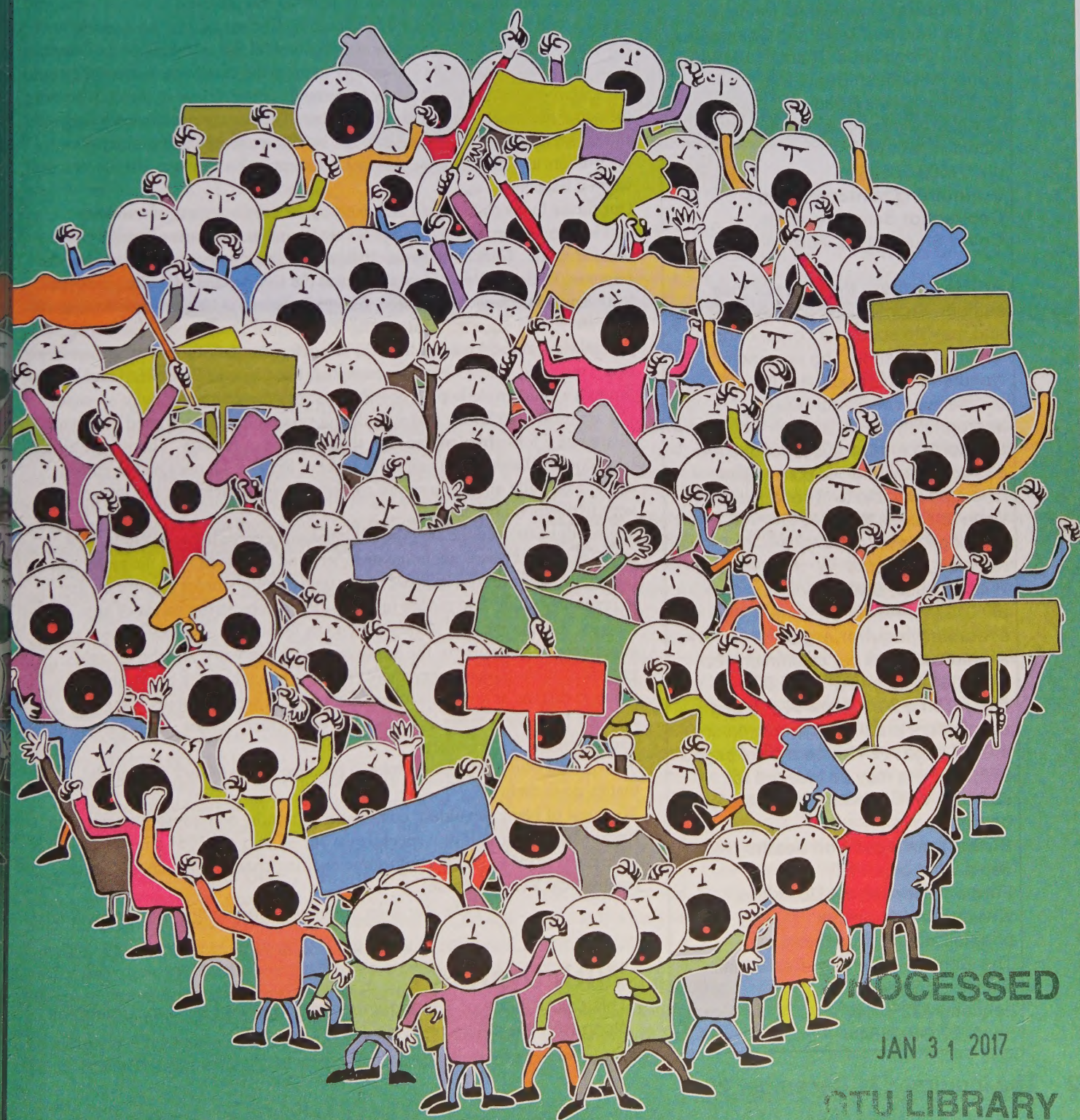


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the voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7905 31 December 2016

Time to resist



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"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
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Stop Press

Owing to an error made by *The Inquirer's* printing company, this issue of the paper is arriving late. Apologies to our readers, writers and advertisers.

New Year Greeting from the chair

It is time for me to send a New Year greeting of thanks and good wishes to a host of people. Firstly, to you, dear readers for your continued interest. Next, to all secretaries and other volunteers who distribute the paper in their congregations. An enormous thank you goes again to the all the District Associations and trust bodies who make grants that keep us solvent enough to hold the cover price unchanged, for another year. I must also mention those who have made donations to sponsor the *Inquirer* colour issues. Thank you all!

Thank you to our advertisers, and to those who write for us. The regular columnists, the newcomers and those who submit pictures.

Thanks, and congratulations go to our editor Colleen Burns, who, along with the copy editor and the administrator and all the members of the board, have used their time, skills and energy to meet the deadlines. I stress that particularly because there have been some irritating delays in the delivery of the paper during November and December. These were not caused by any shortcomings of the *Inquirer* team, but by some unexplained problems with the printers and distributors. Allow me to repeat the apology that I circulated when it happened.

Our future looks challenging and exciting. We are in an era of transition that is being experienced by all denominational newspapers as well as the press at large. To explore these challenges further, we invited a friend of the *Inquirer*, Ruth Gledhill, to speak to us at the GA Annual Meetings last April. Ruth is an experienced journalist, former Religious Affairs correspondent of the *Times* and with a wide knowledge of the publishing world. Following her presentation at the Annual Meetings she offered to talk further at an *Inquirer* board meeting, which we gladly accepted. She came to Essex Hall and led us through a short workshop on possibilities for developing our beloved paper. We are most grateful for that stimulating session. It has prompted the board to arrange a forward planning day, to take place in January. There have also been consultations with a helpful contact at the *Friend*, our Quaker cousins' paper. I mention all this to assure readers and supporters that the future is a very live item on our agenda.

We continue to need the support of Unitarians everywhere to help us to increase sales. Please encourage members and friends to read the paper and take out a subscription. Increase your congregation's order if you can. Try to resist any impulse to reduce numbers. Put a copy in the hands of any visitors. Encourage new writers to send us letters and share their ideas and experiences. Make use of the *Inquirer* as both the voice and the thought-provoker of Unitarians everywhere. There is much to think about and much to discuss as well as worship material and sermon topics. You can visit the *Inquirer* website and follow us on Twitter –@The__Inquirer (two underscores).

How many Unitarians does it take to produce the *Inquirer*? Hundreds! My thanks go to them all.

We boast of being the oldest, continuously running non-conformist paper in Britain. Next year will be a special year for us. It is our 175th anniversary. We have plans to celebrate this with some exciting changes. Watch this space. Happy New Year everyone!

The Rev John Midgley, chairman of The Inquirer Board.

With thanks

This colour issue of *The Inquirer* was sponsored by Bury Unitarians, along with the article on page 11.

Stand up for the common good

By Jane Blackall

Sometimes – quite often, if I’m honest – I feel a sense of despair about the state of the world. If we look at the big picture of world events then there often seem to be plenty of reasons to feel like we’re a bit beyond hope as a species... collectively incapable of making wise choices... and we might well take the rest of the planet down with us in a catastrophic blow-out when we go.

In many ways, here in Britain, over the course of my lifetime at least, we have been largely shielded from the very worst of the chaos. At the moment, there is not war playing out on our doorsteps, and the effects of climate change are as yet not sweeping most of our homes away. But political upheaval is having an impact, ever closer to home, or so it seems to me. Policies which serve to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few are ever-more-the-norm and those basic rights which had seemed sacrosanct for so long in this country – the welfare state, free education, social housing, the NHS – are being whittled away, one by one. The gulf between the haves and have-nots seems to get greater by the year and there is a scary tendency to scapegoat those in genuine need as ‘scroungers’ to justify the starvation of funds to vital public services and to stir up disregard for the common good.

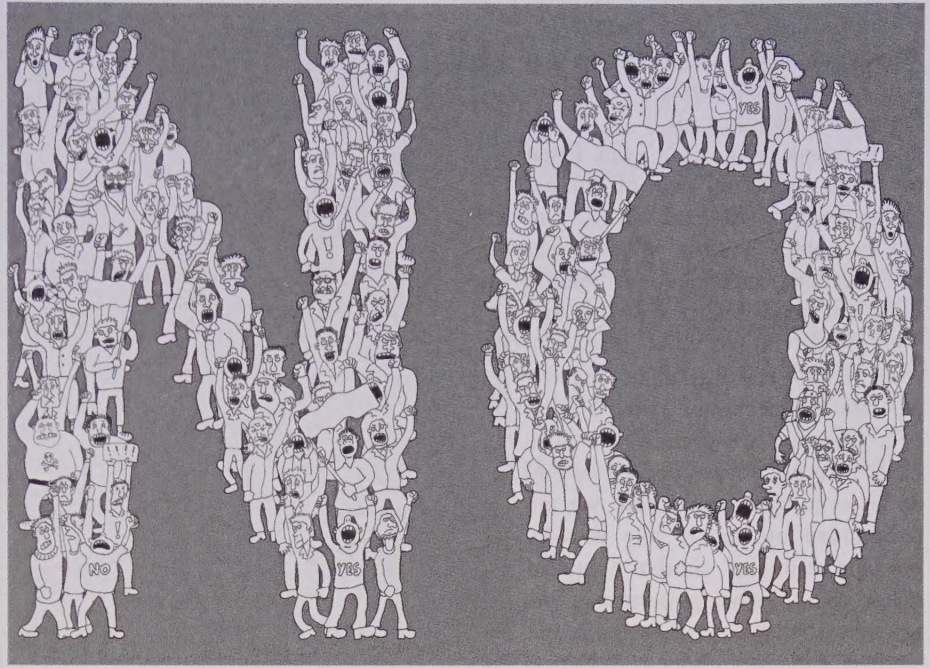
Spectrum of political opinions

Those of us who preach are generally discouraged from talking about politics. In general it’s quite a sensible policy. Across the Unitarian movement there is undoubtedly a spectrum of opinion. (Though perhaps we might say there tends to be a general leaning on those issues I’ve just mentioned.) It is quite understandable that we feel squeamish about prodding at potentially divisive issues. But, I would say, squaring up to injustice is a central, essential, aspect of being religious, in any meaningful sense. It’s a significant historical strand of all the major faith traditions. If we think back to the heroes and heroines of the past, they were often awkward so-and-sos. They saw injustice in their time, and spoke prophetically of it, and made a nuisance of themselves.

In a book called *Resist! Christian Dissent for the 21st Century* Michael G Long writes:

‘Make no mistake about it: Christianity is resistance, its character indelibly marked by opposition to political powers that undermine the biblical values of peace and liberation. Christianity is also resistance to economic powers that show contempt for the justice of God... The prophets focused their sights on the evils of economic injustice... they directed rage-filled words against the unjust accumulation of land and wealth... [to be direct,] Christianity is resistance to economic forces that create cycles of poverty which leave people without access to the material goods they need to survive and flourish.’

Those words from Michael G Long are framed for a mainstream Christian audience, but our Unitarian tradition stems from the same heritage and we share those values, don’t



Shutterstock illustration

we? We would want to stand for justice, peace, liberation. What might that look like in practice, today? There are, of course, all sorts of approaches we can take to resisting injustice. I’m going to highlight three broad strands where we might focus our efforts. For short, I’ll call them ‘truth-seeking’, ‘bridge-building’, and ‘embodying an alternative’.

Three strands of fight for justice

1. Truth-Seeking: You can think of this in a number of different ways. An inner truth-seeking, an outer truth-seeking, and a cosmic truth-seeking. For starters, though, they’re all connected. There’s something to be said for attending to our own inner reality, working on our own ‘stuff’, our own values and virtues, and really knowing ourselves in all our varied shades. This sort of honest self-knowledge is the foundation of understanding and compassion for others which, I would say, is the foundation for seeking justice, peace, and liberation for all. And there’s a lot to be said for seeking the bigger truths, the meaning and purpose, at a cosmic level, which is probably what a lot of us are doing in chapels and meetinghouses on a Sunday morning. But at a more mundane level, thinking about the state of the world and our current political situation, truth-seeking might just amount to critical thinking, taking nothing at face value, being aware of the vested interests and distortion that are widespread in the mass media. Both the recent EU referendum campaigning and, in the states, Donald Trump’s presidential bid may be said to characterise ‘post-truth-politics’. Mischief, propaganda, and outright lies abound and there seem to be no consequences for those who peddle such rot. But, in the end, there will be grim consequences for all of us – individuals and communities – who are taken in by it. So one major strand of resistance is what I’d call ‘truth-seeking’ in its many and varied forms.

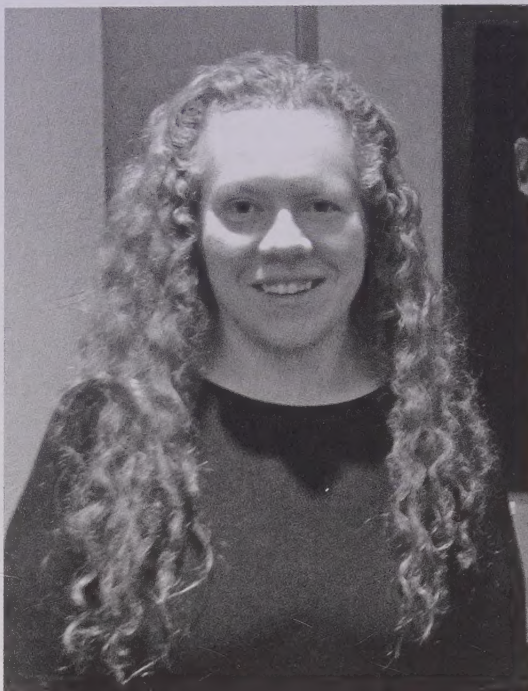
2. Bridge-Building: Each of us needs to cultivate relationships with people who are not like us. Try to mix with people of different backgrounds, different ages, different life

(Continued on next page)

Our faith calls us to resist inequity

(Continued from previous page)

experiences, and – this is the one that I find most challenging – different political viewpoints. It'll do us all good. Speak your truth, and listen to theirs, with an aim of mutual understanding. It's not easy. I'm not especially talking about going to interfaith meetings or joining neighbourhood committees (though both those things are laudable). I'm mainly talking about making personal connections. There's a bit of a tendency – especially for those of us who use social media – to end up in echo-chambers where we are surrounded by people like us who hold more-or-less similar opinions. If we think we've got some truths to share then we need to reach out beyond our own cliques. Speaking up and challenging other people's (friends') opinions about issues that are important. It's hard but necessary work. It's so tempting just to keep our mouths shut for a quiet life. And undoubtedly we've got stuff to learn from people whose lives are significantly different.



Jane Blackall

3. Embodying an Alternative: As John Cobb said: 'we hold up the picture of an alternative... it is important that people know that the self-destructive world in which we now live is not the only possible one. Together with [others who share these values] we must proclaim that, "another world is possible" and then make this possibility visible.' And I say that involves speaking up for those values and living by them for all to see. Doing our best, as the flawed and fabulous humans that we are, as the peculiar and promising community that we are, to embody those ideals of justice, peace, liberation.

There is some great work being done by religious progressives in the US on this front. You may have heard about the 'Moral Mondays' protests which started in North Carolina. A broad coalition of religious voices has joined together to stand up against injustice. Their stated aim is to 'redefine morality in American politics and challenge leaders of faith and moral courage to be more vocally opposed to harmful policies that disproportionately impact the poor, people who are ill, children, immigrants, communities of colour, and religious minorities... [and to] rise above hatred, fear, and left/right politics, in order to reach the highest values of love and justice.' They also affirm rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and they also speak up for reproductive health rights. I imagine it was no mean feat pulling together something that they could all sign up to.

I can do something

Wouldn't it be amazing if progressive religious types over here could do something like that? I'd love to be part of such a thing – speaking prophetically against injustice in all its forms from a progressive religious standpoint instead of being timid – it's what we are called to do.

Sometimes people argue that religious groups should stay

out of politics and remain neutral but I recall the words of the historian and activist Howard Zinn who said:

'It is impossible to be neutral. In a world already moving in certain directions, where wealth and power are already distributed in certain ways, neutrality means accepting the way things are now. It is a world of clashing interests – war against peace, nationalism against internationalism, equality against greed, and democracy against elitism – and it seems to me both impossible and undesirable to be neutral in those conflicts.'

On all of these fronts, there's a limit to what any one person – or small community – can do. And it's easy to feel personally or collectively overwhelmed (especially in moments of crisis). There's a balance to be struck. Each one of us will need to step back from time-to-time. The world needs each one of us to do what

we can – and not to disengage altogether – but at the same time we need to practice self-care if not self-preservation. It's a balancing act. Even if our circles of influence – those people, communities, and causes we can have a noticeable influence on – are much smaller than our circles of concern – there is nearly always something positive and outward-looking we can do. There are some well-known words from Edward Everett Hale, a 19th century Unitarian minister, which come to mind:

'I am only one, but still I am one.

I cannot do everything, but still I can do something;

And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.'

Build bridges, fight injustice

So let us do whatever we can to resist injustice in all its forms – to seek truth, build bridges, and embody an alternative way of living – standing up for justice, peace, liberation, and showing loving-kindness to the world.

I want to end with some words of encouragement from Howard Zinn:

'To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasise in this complex history will determine our lives.

'If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory.'

Jane Blackall is a member of Essex Unitarians, Kensington.

EC continues taking 'Next Steps'

**EC Key Messages – from the meeting held
14 November 2016**

1. Next Steps

Training and Education Development Project

Rachel Skelton presented a report on the project which officially commenced on 1 October 2016. Lots of preparatory work has taken place to clarify governance, support and communication structures for this important work. She had been in touch with many of those involved in training and education within the Denomination and will be in contact with others who need to be involved.

The key objective is to deliver a Denomination-wide framework for training, education, and spiritual and professional development which is effective, coherent and sustainable. A workshop will take place at the next Annual Meetings to feedback on progress and gather views.

2. Next steps

Web-based Spiritual Development & Learning Resource

The Executive Committee gave approval to proceed with commissioning an external agency to design and build a web-based spiritual development and learning resource which is one of the Next Steps priorities. It is intended to attract, and meet the needs of, all those searching online

– not simply current Unitarians – and is being taken forward in partnership with Unitarian College Manchester. It will be funded by the proceeds of the Collection that was taken during the Anniversary Service at the 2016 Annual Meetings and the plan is to demonstrate an early version of this web resource at the Annual Meetings in April.

**3. Next Steps
Identity**

The Next Steps process concluded that work needed to be undertaken to develop a comprehensive response to explaining our identity. The Executive Committee agreed to take forward a project to seek external professional support to enable the Unitarian identity and underlying ethos to be explored and developed into concrete actions. A workshop will be held at the next Annual Meetings.

**4. Next Steps
Financial Sustainability**

A report was received from Robert Ince and Philip Colfox drawing upon research they had undertaken to review financial and building sustainability of congregations and the wider Unitarian and Free Christian Movement. The next steps are to look at ways of supporting congregations, particularly identifying opportunities. Simon Bland, new Ministry and Congregational Support Officer, will take the work forward.

5. Sustentation Fund

The Sustentation Fund provides about £20,000 a year in grants to congregations to support Ministries and is separately registered with the Charity Commission but with Trustees appointed by the General Assembly. The Executive Committee agreed to a request from the Fund's Trustees that a proposal for merger with the General Assembly be pursued which will, if approved, reduce the administrative and financial burdens. Grants to congregations would not be affected.

6. Investment Management

Advice from the General Assembly's legal advisers on the current investment management arrangements was considered. In response, it was agreed that advice should be taken from a qualified investment adviser on investments and to review the current investment policy and ongoing requirements.

7. Nightingale Centre Budget 2016/17

The Budget for the Nightingale Centre for the year beginning 1 October 2016 was approved. The Budget will underpin further improvements to the Centre, building on the success of 2015/16 when the Centre achieved its highest income ever.

Column sponsored by the General Assembly.

The Trustees of

The Ministers' Benevolent Society

invite applications for appointment as

Secretary of the Society

when the present incumbent retires in
December, 2017

Applicants should be serving Unitarian Ministers, with a wide personal knowledge of the Ministers & Lay Pastors throughout the Denomination. Fluency in the use of IT, and, as a minimum, familiarity with MS Word, Excel, PDF files and emails is essential. There is one email meeting and one face-to-face meeting in Birmingham each year but the need to deal with Special Grants occurs periodically throughout the year, so candidates must also be able and willing to devote the time and energy to deal with these duties. An honorarium and expenses will be paid. The Object of the Society and details of its work are set out in the final two pages of the recently circulated Annual Report. Interviews will be conducted by a panel at Unitarian New Meeting Church in Birmingham.

Applicants are invited to submit a CV explaining how they meet the above requirements to reach Sandy Ellis, President of the Society, at The Hermitage, Sale Green. Nr. Droitwich, Worcs WR9 7LN by 28th February, 2017.

Death Notice

GARRARD – Sheila

Peacefully after a long period of ill health on 18th November 2016, aged 82 years. Of Radley (Oxfordshire). Much loved wife of Tony, dearly loved mother of Keith, Neil and Colin and adored nana of Eleanor, Annabel and Maisie.

Unitarian slave connections are complex

By Alan Ruston

Cliff Reed in the *Inquirer* 22 October outlines the role that Robert Hibbert and his ancestors played in Jamaica in relation to slavery before its abolition in the 1830s. Hibbert was a Unitarian, and the Trust which was set up after his death has made a continuing and positive input into the Unitarian movement, particularly in relation to the education and training of ministers. Cliff cites my history of the Hibbert Trust published in 1984 amongst others as a source. Hibbert is a shadowy figure and all we know positively of his opinions is that he had a strong dislike of the Church of England, so he set up his trust to 'aid the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form.'

Stephen Lingwood in his letter in response (issue of 26 November) asks, 'We have to confront the uncomfortable truth that this wealth was created by slaves. Are we still perpetuating this injustice by the use of this fund to support white British Unitarians like me? Does this money really belong to those slaves, as it was their labour that created it? Have we stolen it from them?' The Hibbert Trustees, one of which I have never been, can only give grants in support of the above-stated aim. It should be noted that considerable sums have been donated to the Trust in more recent times, from entirely different sources that have no connection with slavery.

Wealth was based on cotton

Stephen's questions raise big issues which have been the concern of historians and are wider than Robert Hibbert and Jamaica. Britain's wealth in the late 18th and during the 19th century was based on the manufacture of cotton goods which went all over the world; cotton goods were the engine of our economic growth. Where did the cotton come from? Almost wholly from the USA where it was picked and made ready for export until the 1860s by slaves. On this basis, much of the British economy can be seen as based on the results of slavery.

The position has been put clearly recently by David Olusoga, a historian seen recently in *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, a BBC TV series. (The series was based on his book bearing the same title.) Born in England of a British mother and a Nigerian father, he was profiled in the *Radio Times*, arguing that black people have long been a component of Britain's population but have been brushed out of historical accounts. The following is a quote from him in the 5 November *Guardian* review section, page 13: 'Take the industrial revolution, the stories about spinning jennys and water frames are all part of our heritage. But where does the cotton being spun in those machines come from? At school we went to mills and factories and nobody at any point in my education pointed out that the cotton processed in those mills was made by enslaved black Americans. When we talk about the history of the industrial revolution, the missing people in that revolution are the 1.8 million enslaved people who made that cotton. It was our biggest export and almost all of it came from the American deep south.'

This raises the uncomfortable question for us – how much of 19th century income of leading Unitarians that went to the creation of chapels and trust funds was based on manufac-



Robert Hibbert's house
that slavery built

† The INQUIRER ^{£1}
The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians since 1793 23 October 2016

As many as one-fifth of wealthy Victorian Britons derived all or part of their fortune from the slave economy.

tured cotton goods, the raw material for which was produced by slaves? Many of the leading Unitarians in Lancashire and in particular in Manchester were cotton magnates. There has been no research on this subject, but any donor of funds in the 19th century who was a cotton manufacturer was providing money just one stage removed from materials picked and processed by slaves.

Where did today's money come from?

Stephen is concerned that a Hibbert grant he recently received could be seen as resulting from slavery. The question is wider than this. Taking account of cotton goods manufacture there are other funds that give grants to ministers, for example the Ministers Stipend Augmentation Fund. This was founded by Christopher Rawdon in 1856 who was a merchant and cotton goods manufacturer, about whom I have written in my recent Lindsey Press book *On the Side of Liberty*. Other cotton manufacturers were amongst the donors of the £20,000 which set up the Fund. It's difficult to find any trust funds set up in the 19th century where it's certain that the donors had no financial connections arising out of slavery.

As Cliff pointed out, Robert Hibbert received over £21,000 directly as compensation for 1070 slaves that were freed in Jamaica. The details of who received what from the £20 million made available in the 1830s were highlighted in the *Independent* on 24 February 2013. An article revealed that Dr Nick Draper of University College London showed that in searching 46,000 records he found that as many as one-fifth of wealthy Victorian Britons derived all or part of their fortune from the slave economy. Research has not been done as far as I am aware that reveals the names of Unitarians who were in this category but there are likely to be a number.

Hibbert not the only one

In conclusion I'd like to point out that arising from the concerns raised about Robert Hibbert by Cliff and Stephen, the whole issue is complex. Hibbert is unlikely to be alone amongst Unitarians with close connections with the slave economy. What to do about making compensation from the big economic powers of the past to those now poor communities who suffered under slavery is an active issue and may some day take place. However in my view individual piecemeal actions for the perceived 'sins' of ancestors is fraught with uncertainty and problems. Attitudes then could be rather different and variable amongst Unitarians to those held even in the late 19th century.

(Continued on next page)

Best Practices: A pop-up Nativity play

By Jean Bradley

Like many churches and chapels, we have a toy service a few weeks before Christmas. The service gives people an opportunity to give new or good as new gifts for children aged from babies up to adolescence. These toys and other gifts are given to families who live in poverty: without any outside help their children would experience a very bleak time at Christmas. We have a family service on the first Sunday of the month throughout the year and have a regular attendance of quite small children. So when it came to this year's toy service, I felt that we could do something a little different. I am blessed with one member of the congregation who works alongside me with the children. I think of a theme for the service and a related project that the young ones can do and then my helper organises the activity. She in her turn has other members of the congregation who support her in actually working with the children during the service.

Whatever I suggest, she always says very pleasantly, 'yes, we can do that'. But a couple of months ago, I had an idea for the toy service and said to her, 'How about doing a "pop-up" Nativity play? We won't have a rehearsal, we can just do it.' My kind friend paused for quite a while before very cautiously saying a much quieter, 'Yes, we can do that'.

So we gathered together different materials over the weeks and made simple costumes for Mary, Joseph, the angels, some shepherds, some wise people (open to boys or girls!) and of course the star.

We took all the costumes and objects relating to the story, shepherd's crooks, toy sheep, crowns and so on, to the chapel the day before and hung the costumes up ready. We then kept our fingers crossed that all would work out well.

The next morning, we were waiting anxiously (we never know which children will come to chapel), only to be told that three of our 'usual' children were all going to the same birthday party. It started to look as if we would have to 'volunteer' some adults as shepherds, or maybe even as wise people!

But we needn't have worried, as minutes before the service started we discovered enough children had arrived. After the children's story and prayer time, the children were given their costumes, (so no time for discussion about who wanted to be Mary or a King!) It all happened so fast that the children simply



The Rev Jean Bradley leads the children in a 'pop-up' Nativity. Photo by David Strachan

got on with the play. The story ended with the 'wise people' bringing gifts and after rapturous applause. The children were asked to receive all the gifts of toys from the congregation members. They were stacked up high all around our pop-up stable with our instant baby Jesus!

In this way the children could understand that there were other children not as fortunate as themselves and they were pleased to gather up all the toys and help by putting them into bags, ready for them to be delivered to the Council for Voluntary Services collection point, who work alongside social services in distributing them just before Christmas.

In our commercial world, we are recommended to 'buy in' just about everything for Christmas, rather than do it or make it ourselves, and at the top end of the economic scale, this can include Christmas table designers and gift wrapping specialists, even to hiring a butler for the day! Most of us are not in that league but perhaps we should think about leaning a little more towards a 'spiritual emphasis' rather than a material one.

Entering into an impromptu Christmas celebration may have helped us appreciate rather more the hardships that many people endure in their lives. It reminded us we need to think about those who are searching for shelter for the night and why this should be so in our society.

We should truly consider why we give gifts: are we simply doing it because we receive them ourselves and because we judge our gifts by how much money has been spent on us? Should we not give gifts to honour people, as they were given in the nativity story? Such self-questioning may bring us closer to an understanding of compassionate love.

What could be more hopeful than restoring an old story, bringing it back to life with a message that is now needed more than ever, in order to promote the idea of peace on earth and goodwill to all mankind?

Why not let the Christmas spirit 'pop-up' in our churches and chapels, social halls and even in our own homes? Sometimes being impromptu, or letting our inner child out, will allow us to openly love and share joy with each other without any barriers.

The Rev Jean Bradley is minister at Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford.

Slavery and Unitarians

(Continued from previous page)

An interesting work on this subject is by Douglas Stange, *British Unitarians Against American Slavery 1833-1865* (London and Toronto, 1984). This shows that there were many Unitarians who were keen and active against slavery but there were others who were not – for a variety of reasons. For example the Rev RM Montgomery minister of Mary Street Chapel Taunton indicated in 1851 that Lewins Mead Chapel, Bristol also arose out of slave money. He asked, were those involved in that Unitarian chapel going to give back the money? Bristol merchants, as were those in Liverpool, were much engaged in the actual international slave trade, which Britain had abolished in 1807. The various arguments amongst some rich Unitarians on the abolition of the international slave trade in the early 19th century is yet another story.


Alan Ruston is a Unitarian historian and a member of the Watford fellowship.

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Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel

10-13 April 2017


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Exiled minister reunited with his family

In October 2016 *The Inquirer* reported that the Rev Fulgence Ndagijimana, minister of the Unitarian Community in Burundi was now in exile in Canada, having been imprisoned during political upheavals in his homeland. Supported by the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists, then Unitarians in Canada and the US, Fulgence is serving an internship in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on a programme towards qualification as a Unitarian minister. Since his imprisonment in Burundi and escape to Canada, he has been separated from his wife Thérèse and son Brown. News then reached us that the family was re-united, in time for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year.

John Midgley: Fulgence, we know that you are living in Canada, and we were delighted to hear the wonderful news that you are re-united with your family. Can you tell us, how long has it been? When were you separated from your family?

Fulgence Ndagijimana: Thanks John. Thérèse and Brown left Burundi for the USA in 2012 and later decided to stay there and apply for asylum. I was able to visit them, with some regularity, in the US until August 2014 but I have never wanted to stay in the USA. I saw myself as having a role in Burundi, not only as the Unitarian church Minister but also in the wider community. With the situation getting more difficult, with massive human rights violations in terms of extrajudiciary killings and massive incarceration, I felt even more compelled to stay and make my contribution to the process of building a new Burundi which is home to all people, in all our diversity.

It didn't work out. And after an attack on the church, I was kidnapped from the church office, taken off to be killed in the bush, outside the city. I was rescued, by policemen who were not part of the kidnap plan, but powerful people in the regime then decided to imprison me. They were only willing to release me after tremendous pressure from Unitarans and Universalists around the world.

JM: That sounds horrific. Tell us the about your wife and son. Where have they been all this time?



The Rev Fulgence Ndagijimana with his wife Thérèse and son Brown.

FN: They have been in Portland, Maine, in USA, going through the immigration process. My wife Thérèse was working and Brown was going to school. He is now in third grade. They were part of a Unitarian community, the Allen Avenue UU Church, Portland. They both loved it there, felt very much loved and a part of the community.

JM: When did you learn that you were going to be back together? Did the news come as a surprise?

FN: It has been difficult to live separately and we have all been looking forward to the possibility of being re-united. While they were in USA, they would come to the Canadian border and claim refuge on the basis that they cannot go back to Burundi. And since I am here and accepted as a protected person by the government of Canada, they wanted to come into Canada. The Canadian Immigration authorities accepted their claim on condition that they go through an immigration hearing to determine their eligibility for refugee protection. This hearing will be held early in 2017. It all happened at short notice, but was not a complete surprise.

JM: So now you are in Canada, how are you all settling in? Is Thérèse happy there? Has Brown started in school? Does he like it here?

FN: We are now settling in happily. We have moved to a house big enough for the three of us. Brown is in school and he loves it and is very much enjoying the snow that has just begun to fall. Thérèse is working on the detailed application so that she will be able to get employment here. It is slow but we are confident, we will get there.

JM: We are all very pleased for you. We hope that your training programme for the Unitarian Ministry goes well, and that you and your family are happy and have a good future together. Happy New Year to you all!

FN: Thank you for your love and concern, John. I send my greetings to British Unitarians who have been on our side during good and difficult times. Happy New Year to your family and to all the British Unitarians!

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Letter to the Editor

Another view of the brain and spirit

To the Editor:

The Rev Peter Godfrey (*Inquirer* 19/11/16) implies that our brains unaided generate experience, both sensory and spiritual. I worked with computers for 21 years, and they are not conscious, sentient beings – they are machines, designed (by people) to assist us in our lives. The brain is an enormously complicated computer, a machine, perhaps designed (although *not* by us) to assist us in our lives. All nerve cells are basically the same, and fire off similar electrical currents (waves of polarisation activity) responding to various physical stimuli. But this does not account for the diversity of our sensory experience – sight, sound, etc. – nor the experience of ethical, aesthetic and spiritual values. Many traditions speak of something beyond the brain – mind, soul, psyche, *manomayakosha* (Vedanta), etc.

Perhaps their views are mistaken, but at least they acknowledge something other than just the nervous system.

The Rev Godfrey asks how immaterial mind can interact with material brain, but today's science knows of particles (quarks, electrons, neutrinos, and hypothetical dark matter) that are a far cry from Democritus' inert chunks of matter ('atoms'). Perhaps minds interact by tweaking the quantum wave-functions, themselves entirely immaterial (i.e. unobservable in principle in themselves – we only observe what are hypothesized to be their effects). Or perhaps the particles have a 'spiritual charge' which enables the interaction.

In Theosophy – I am a member – we speak of the Absolute manifesting the whole Universe as one being, on several planes from Spirit to Matter, and ourselves as part of it, being constituted similarly. Thus spirit and matter may interact as parts of one entity – matter being just spirit

'in disguise'. Of course, if mind is not reducible to brain, then it may survive the death of the body. (I note a Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies article following the Rev Godfrey's.) Indeed, perhaps our minds are part of a universal mind (Plato's World Soul) that coordinates things. Or we may be the products of a Greater Mind, from which we and the Universe alike come, and to which we go? (This is surely not an entirely new idea!)

Sir Karl Popper said that to be scientific, a theory must be falsifiable – may I ask if Rev Godfrey can think of any circumstances that would falsify his current views? The word 'physicist' was not meant as an insult, but he may prefer the term 'reductionist', which is entirely in line with the (current) materialistic scientific tradition.

Mike Rutter

Chorlton Unitarian Church, Manchester

The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund

53 years old and still going strong

Challenged to raise £50,000,

you helped us to raise £55,200 although that included a few special one-off donations.

It's hard to believe that in this day and age some children would not have a holiday if it were not for our fund but that is true. Your generosity helps to provide a holiday for those children and opens up a whole new world for many children, a world removed from mobile phones and computer games!

Thanks to you there were a record 16 holidays in 2016 and as always, the children's descriptions of what the holidays meant to them are deeply moving. **The work goes on, so do please help us to continue giving needy children a country holiday.**

Your gifts for the 2017 holidays will be as deeply appreciated as ever. **Our target is £50,000 for direct donations. It costs approximately £350 per child and we hope to send 200 children.**

Gifts will be gratefully received by the Hon. Assistant Treasurer, Mrs Sue Catts, 8 Woodlands Drive, Beverley, HU17 8BZ. Please note that the Fund can reclaim income tax paid by any individual (as long as s/he has paid income tax) if a Gift Aid Donation form has been signed. A copy of the form was in the previous issue of *The Inquirer*, or may be obtained from Mrs Catts. Giving with a Gift Aid Donation form makes a gift of £20 worth £25.65 to the Fund. Gifts may now be made very easily on line, in various ways, by going to our website: **www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk**

If you shop online, then please use Easyfundraising, naming 'Send-a-Child' as your beneficiary, as we receive a small donation for everything purchased and this year we had £255 from this source. (**www.easyfundraising.org.uk/**)

The Fund is a registered charity, number 271585. All gifts are used for the holidays – except for gifts in someone's memory which are put into a Capital Account with the interest used for holidays. Please remember the Fund in your will. Legacies are a much appreciated and valuable income.

**Copies of the full 2015-16 report and appeal may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary,
Rev Ernest Baker, 145 Tullibardine Road, Sheffield, South Yorks, S11 7GN
Telephone 0114 266 1070.**

Bury Unitarians welcome their new minister



The Rev Kate McKenna was welcomed by some of the children of the Bury congregation. Photos above and below by Roger Mills

By Anne Mills

Sunday, November 6th 2016 was a special day for members of Bury Unitarian Church, as it marked the first service to be conducted by their new Minister. The Rev Kate McKenna took up her post on 1 November, and was busy from the beginning: moving house and settling into the Manse, attending meetings, and starting to get to know individual members of the congregation informally. Her partner, Adrian Brady, also attended the service, in order to support her in her work.

Kate trained at Harris Manchester College, Oxford and obtained an MA in Pastoral Theology at Heythrop College, University of London. She was valedicted in June and this is her first Ministry. Before she moved to Bury she lived and worked in Norwich, where she attended the Octagon Chapel, and conducted services there for several years.

In her service, Kate commented on the expectations of both Minister and congregation: referring to Alice meeting the Unicorn, she hoped that now that she and the congregation had seen each other, they would choose to believe in each other: although there was no such thing as the perfect Minister or the perfect Church.

After the service, congregation-members celebrated their new Minister and her first service: she was presented with a bouquet of flowers and a card, and a toast was drunk, to wish her well in her work. Anne Mills, Chairman of the Congregation, said: 'I am very pleased to welcome Kate officially to our congregation; she comes to us highly recommended, and we are very fortunate that she has chosen to begin her ministerial work amongst us. We hope that her Ministry and Bury Unitarian Church will be successful, pleasurable, and productive – for us all. This has been a very happy service, full of laughter and positive thoughts, and we can build from this excellent beginning with enthusiasm.'

Kate summed up her first impressions: 'I've been delighted by the welcome Adrian and I have received, both to Bury

itself and specifically from Bury Unitarians. The congregation members couldn't have worked harder to make us feel wanted here, and I hope we'll have many happy and fruitful years working together.

'I am really excited about the move to Bury, and we're already falling in love with the town and the people. Anyone who doesn't already know the Unitarian church is welcome to come along and meet the congregation and myself, to have a look around our beautiful modern worship-space, and to talk to us about the exciting liberal faith that is Unitarianism.'

Kate's first few weeks of Ministry were extremely busy: she plunged immediately into Remembrance Services, and these were followed, after a brief interval, by all the Christmas Services, including an excellent Carols by Candlelight evening, after which mulled wine and mince pies were served.

Anne Mills is chair of the Bury congregation.



Kate McKenna with the mayor of Bury and his consort, along with Jean Brookhouse, member of the Bury Congregation.

News in brief

A joyful induction service at York

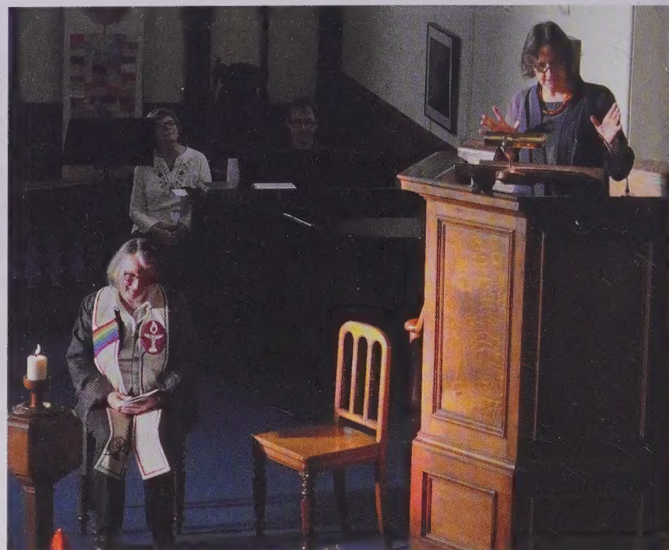
On Saturday 5 November, we at York Unitarian Chapel held our induction service for our new minister, the Rev Nicky Jenkins. The Rev Sarah Tinker set the tone of joyfulness and dedication in her chalice lighting and the first hymn 'Celebrate the Gift of Laughter'. This is very fitting since our new minister has a lovely sense of humour which we all thoroughly appreciate.

The presentation was given by GA President Dorothy Hewerdine and then Sarah gave a very interfaith, interesting address with a light touch.

Initially when the invitations were sent out, we were disappointed that the Mayor of York was not able to attend but was sending the Sheriff, Mr Jonathan Tyler, instead. However, when the Sheriff stood up to give his greetings it transpired that he and his wife both had Unitarian roots. Apparently one of his wife's ancestors was the Rev. Charles Wickstead (1810-1885) who became the first minister of the newly built gothic style church of Mill Hill, Leeds.

The most moving part of the service was the shared covenant between our minister and us. Several of us came to the front to ask Nicky if she would help build our community, share our joys and sorrows, help us find a way through trouble and confusion and to help us face our new challenges and opportunities.

She then asked us as a community if we were willing to share our talents, insights and experiences to build and maintain a spiritual community and maintain the freedom of our pulpit.



Sarah Tinker (in pulpit) conducted the induction service for the Rev Nicky Jenkins at York Photo by John Hewerdine

She asked for our support with pastoral care and spiritual guidance and to help with outreach work and support her work as minister through more difficult times.

This has truly set the tone for a collaborative, dedicated ministry.

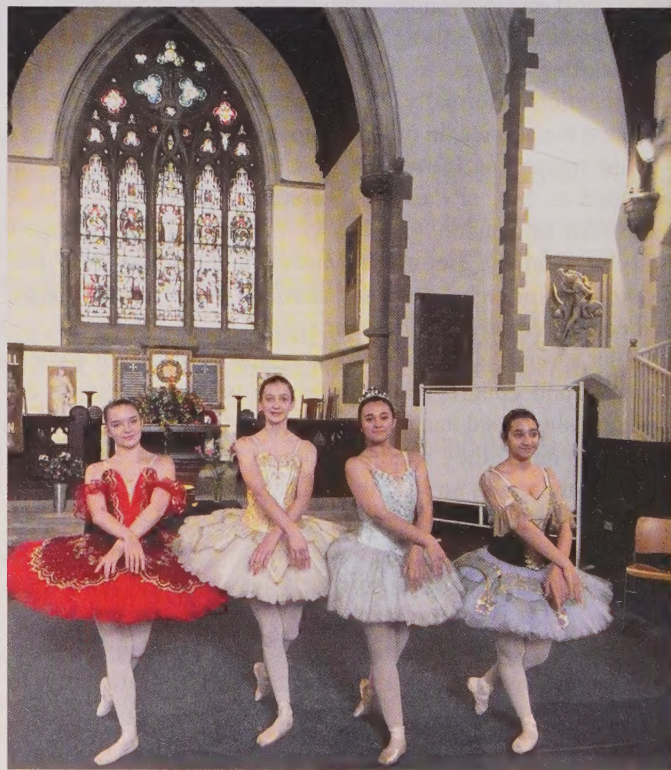
There followed a veritable feast provided by the congregation which was much appreciated by all!

– Claire Lee, a member of York Unitarians.

Special services at Rosslyn Hill



Rev Kate Dean with Unitarian General Assembly President Dorothy Hewerdine. On Saturday 12 November, Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead, welcomed their new settled minister, the Rev Kate Dean, in a spectacular Induction Service which included performances by Charming School Chamber Choir and Rosslyn Hill Chapel Choir. There was also the premiere of a song written by David Kent especially for the service, greetings sent by two of the chapel's former ministers and a welcome from local Baptist minister Ewan King. The service was conducted by the London and SE District Minister Rev Martin Whitell, and the General Assembly President Dorothy Hewerdine was amongst the special guests. Photo by John Hewerdine



The morning service on 16th October marked the 70th Anniversary of the Rona Hart School of Dance, which has met in Rosslyn Hill's Chapel Hall in Hampstead since it began. Four ballet dancers from the school performed at the service which was dedicated to the memory of its founder, Miss Rona Hart, who passed away in Suffolk on 8 October surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Photo by Miss Linzi Else